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AIR INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

SUBJECT

(Uncl) ~~Luncheon~~ Conversation with Russian Military Attache

AREA REPORTED ON

Sweden

FROM (Agency)

OAIrA, Stockholm, Sweden

DATE OF REPORT

8 August 1955

DATE OF INFORMATION

28 July 1955

EVALUATION

A-1

PREPARED BY (Initials)

BERKENKAMP

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Personal contact

REFERENCES (Cite of source as applicable)

BAIR 18; ~~IR-420-55~~, ~~IR-420-55~~

SUMMARY: (Enter outline of summary of report. Give significance in final one sentence per paragraph. List inclusions at lower left. Begin text of report on AF Form 112, Part II.)

- This*
1. This is a report of a conversation that took place between the preparing officer and Major Boris Konev, Assistant Military Attache to Sweden from the Soviet Union. The preparing officer was a luncheon guest of Major Konev.
 2. In the past several months the Soviet attaches in Sweden have increased their efforts to cultivate the friendship of the Western attaches.
 3. This report was written to cover the entire luncheon conversation, as completely as it could be remembered, even though many points may seem trivial.

APPROVED:

CHARLES H. MacDONALD
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1. Early in June 1955 Major Boris Konev (Russian Assistant Military Attache) approached me and suggested that it would be nice if we went to lunch sometime. I replied that I was soon to go on leave and perhaps we could talk about it later. On 26 July 1955, I encountered Major Konev again for the first time since returning from leave. He immediately reminded me of the previous conversation about lunch and suggested that we make a date. He asked when it would be most convenient and I suggested Friday, 29 July. He agreed and suggested we meet in front of Berns Restaurant at 1300. The following day, 27 July, I called Major Konev and told him I would be unable to keep the luncheon appointment on Friday but could make it Thursday, the 28th, if that was agreeable with him. Without hesitation, he agreed.

2. Approximately three minutes prior to our appointed meeting I walked up in front of the restaurant and met Major Konev as he was approaching from the opposite direction. We exchanged courteous greetings in English and as we walked into the restaurant he commented on all the coins in the bottom of the pool immediately in front of the restaurant. He stated that in Russia when people go to the Black Sea, they throw coins in the Sea which is symbolic of their return to that area. I told him that in the United States we had a similar custom of throwing coins in a pool and making a wish.

3. Though Major Konev speaks English reasonably well, he is a little more fluent in Swedish and suggested that we speak in Swedish. From then on, our conversation was about 75% in Swedish and 25% in English.

4. We walked into the restaurant and Major Konev had a reserved table to which he led me. We sat down and he asked whether I preferred fish or meat. I replied that I would like fish. He said he preferred that too and proceeded to order from the waiter. Then we talked for a while about a certain type of fish that is found only in Russia; i.e., the fish from the Don River from which caviar is made. Major Konev suggested that perhaps we should have schnapps. I agreed and he ordered it along with beer. He told me that in Russia they had very good beer that varied from about 8% to as high as 12% alcohol. I stated that I preferred German beer and he asked if I had been in Germany. I told him that I had been in Germany only for a brief period, but had flown over Germany during the war. I then asked him if he had been in Germany during the war. He stated he was there but for a very short period. Then he went on to explain that he was in Germany between 1949 and 1952. The question of his service during the war seemed to be the only part of the conversation throughout the whole luncheon that he was a little reluctant to talk about. He stated that during the post-war period he was stationed in Bad Nilsen in the English zone as a liaison officer, and that he also had occasion to visit the American and French zones in Germany.

5. He asked if I had a family here, and how many children. I told him I did have a family here and before I could answer him about the children, he asked if I had two children, and I confirmed the fact that I did. He asked also about their ages and what schools they attended. I asked about his family and he seemed quite anxious to talk about it, and said he had a 17 year old daughter and a 16 year old son in Moscow. Those are his only children. His wife was in Sweden prior to April, but in April she returned to Moscow to help the daughter who is about to enter "high school" to study medicine. He said the entrance examination for a career in medicine was very difficult, and as an example, he said for every 100 spaces available in school there are 800 applicants; therefore, only 1 out of every 9 taking the entrance examination will pass and be allowed to enter medical training. For this reason his wife was in Moscow to help the daughter with her studies. He stated that his son would go to military school, but then went on to say that the boy's eyes were bad and that he (Major Konev) doubted very much if the son would be accepted in military school. I asked what the son was interested in as a career, to which he

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replied "the Navy", but again he was not sure that the son would be able to follow a naval or military career. I inquired as to what the son might do if unable to follow a military career. He stated he did not know as he had not seen his son for a year and that he was anxious to return to Moscow to talk with him.

6. I asked Konev how long he had been in Sweden, and he said he had been here approximately one year. I asked where he had learned his Swedish and he stated he knew absolutely no Swedish upon arrival in Stockholm, but he had been studying it during the entire year's stay. He has a teacher and goes to class twice each week. We talked about my training in Swedish and the fact that there was much more incentive for him to know Swedish than me since most Swedish people speak English. I asked how long his tour in Sweden might last and he replied that he could never be sure. I suggested that he might be here two more years, and he said he didn't think it would be that long; perhaps 1-1/2 years longer. He then commented on the hardship of being away from his children for a long period, and for that reason his stay may not be as long as it otherwise might be. He also commented on the hardship of being away from his wife, but added that more as an afterthought.

7. He asked me where I lived in the United States and I told him no place in particular since we move about frequently in the service. He said his home was in Moscow but that he too moved about in the service. I asked him if he had recently heard from Major Konobeev (assistant Russian military attache who recently returned to Moscow - see IR-291-55). He said he understood that Major Konobeev was at the Black Sea. I said it was my understanding that Major Konobeev was going to Moscow and he then replied that Konobeev was on leave, and that the Black Sea was one of the finest vacation spots in Russia.

8. Major Konev asked me about an individual in the American Embassy whom he had met before - he wanted to know the man's job. I told him he was one of the assistant attaches. Major Konev said "not in the military?" and I said "no". The subject was dropped then but he did seem genuinely interested in this individual. He then asked who the other American officer was at the cocktail party (on 26 July when Konev invited me to lunch). I asked who he meant and he described the man as an American air officer, a major he thought, and very jolly. I told him that must have been Major Havard. Then he commented on the similarity between the USAF and Army summer uniforms. He did note that there was a very slight difference in the shade of tan between the two.

9. Another subject of conversation started out with Major Konev asking me when we would get our new President. "In 1956?" he asked. I told him we would have the next elections in 1956 and we may get a new President or may keep the same one. His reply was "Ike". He stated he had a great deal of respect for Ike and thought the American people were very much behind Ike. I told him I thought that was true and that I also thought Ike was quite popular with many people outside the U. S. He said that one reason he had a lot of respect for Ike was the way he handled the Big Four meeting in Geneva and his attitude toward Bulganin and the other Russian delegates. I asked Konev what he thought of the Geneva conference. He said he thought it may be the beginning of more understanding between the East and West. He expressed the hope that there would be much more understanding and friendliness between the East and West in the future.

10. About half way through the luncheon Konev suggested that we drop the formal Swedish form "ni" (you) and use the familiar form "du" (you), in our conversation. From that point on we used the familiar form of addressing each other.

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11. He also talked about sports. Konev said he was primarily interested in tennis and skiing. I told him that I liked squash and rowing and that I had seen the Russians row at Henley, England, last month. I commented on how well trained and physically powerful the Russian crews were (Russia won 3 events out of 4 in which they participated). He acknowledged but made no comment.

12. At about 11:30 we departed the restaurant and I offered Konev a ride to wherever he was going since he did not have a car. He accepted and said that he had some shopping to do; that he was going to buy some tennis trunks. I asked if he would like to be dropped off at NK's (Nordiska Kompaniet, a large department store) and he said that would be fine. I let him off at NK's and thanked him for the lunch. He was very courteous and said he enjoyed our conversation.

COMMENTS of the Preparing Officer:

13. Major Konev is about 5'8" and weighs approximately 170 lbs. He is rather stockily built. He has a pink complexion, blue eyes and an indentation on the lower left cheek near the corner of the mouth; it resembles a large dimple. His primary motive at the luncheon appeared to be nothing more than the cultivation of friendship and gaining of biographical knowledge.

EUGENE H. BERKENKAMP
Lt. Colonel, USAF
Senior Assistant Air Attache

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